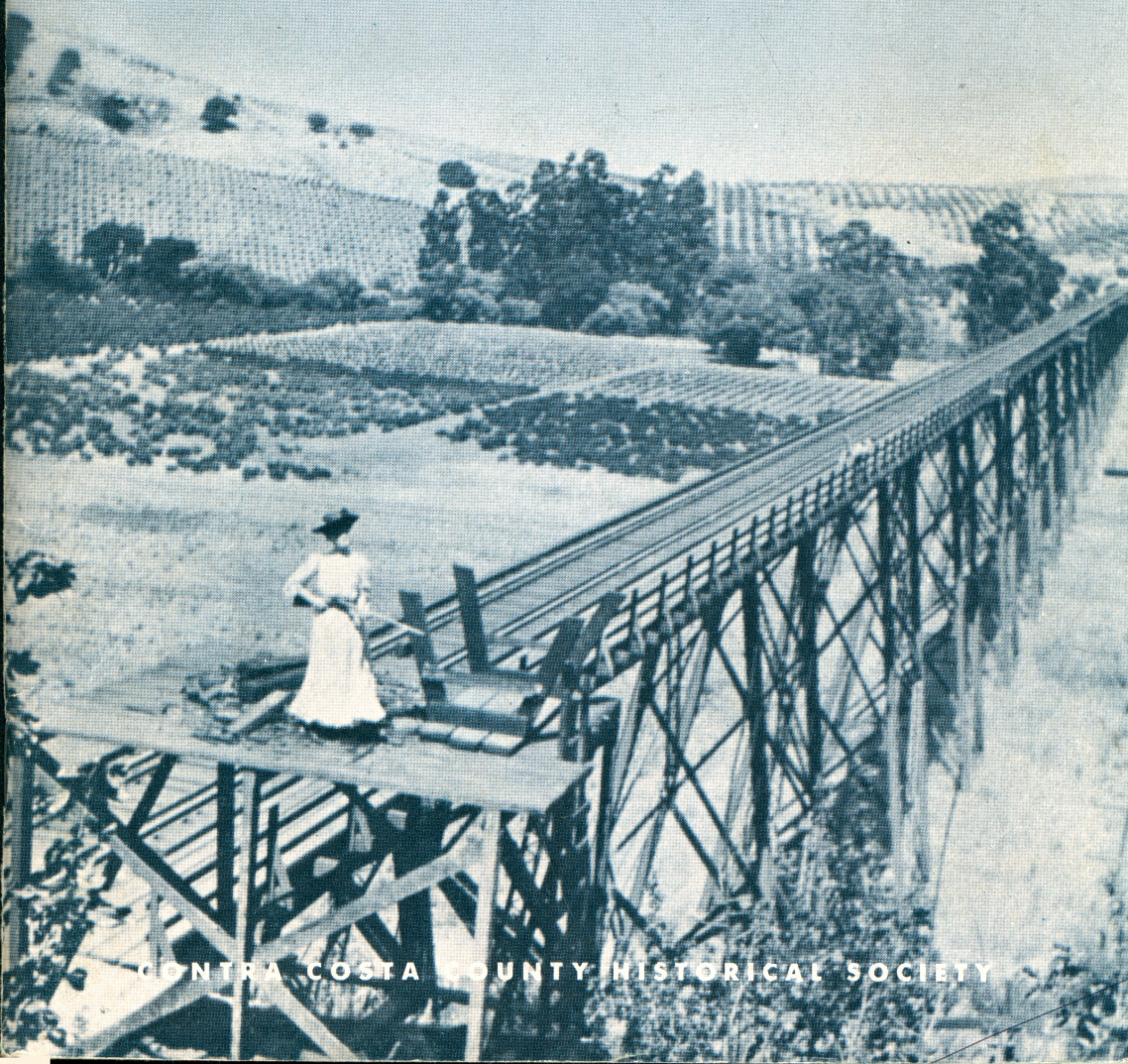
HISTORICAL MATERIALS
LAFAYETTE LIBRARY

Contra Costa Chronicles

SPRING
1966



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Publications of the Contra Costa County Historical Society

JOHN MUIR NATURALIST, by John W. Winkley. A recent, intimate view of the famous western conservationist, who made his home in Martinez. Includes an illuminating account of his treks into remote wildlands. 141 pages, illustrated. Cloth, gold stamped, $2.50.

ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA. A luxury reproduction of the extremely rare Smith & Elliott work, the first history (circa 1879) on Contra Costa County. Faithfully lithographed on heavy vellum with two colored maps. Book is 11″ x 8¾″. 54 pages text, 73 pages illustrations. Buckram, gold stamped. $12.50. Out of print.

DR. JOHN MARSH, WILDERNESS SCOUT, by John W. Winkley. Edition limited to 1000 copies. A new appraisal of Contra Costa County's famous early pioneer. 95 pages, illustrated. Cloth, gold stamped. $2.50.

PLAT OF THE RANCHO LAS JUNTAS, with explanatory comment by Leonora Fink. Lithographic reproduction of U. S. Surveyor General's 1864 plat of Contra Costa rancho granted to William Welch by Mexican Governor in 1844. Folder, heavy vellum paper, 17″ x 22″ (open). 25¢.

Orders for Society publications are to be directed to: James B. Jory, Secretary, P.O. Box 190, Martinez, California. The current CONTRA COSTA CHRONICLES *is distributed to Society members. Extra copies of current and previous issues as available, $2.00 per copy. Please include 4% California sales tax with all orders.*

Cover

The mystery baffles our best historians. Who is this Annie Oakley type, guarding the Santa Fe trestle in Alhambra Valley? She stands at the west end of the structure which was built in 1898. This photo, however, was taken of the double-rail crossing after 1910 when it was strengthened and the guard rail added. A copy of the original photo owned by the Alred Brewen family.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS

Justice A. F. Bray, *President*
Louis L. Stein, Jr., *Vice President*
James B. Jory, *Secretary*
Dr. Walter T. Helms, *Treasurer*

DIRECTORS

Roy S. Bloss, Alamo
Justice A. F. Bray, Martinez
Grant Burton, Walnut Creek
Miss Ruth Galindo, Concord
E. George Harlow, Richmond
Mrs. Bertha D. Hellum, Pleasant Hill
Dr. Walter T. Helms, Richmond
James B. Jory, Martinez
Donald E. Little, Antioch
Edward M. Rowland, Reliez Valley
Louis L. Stein, Jr., Berkeley
John W. Winkley, Walnut Creek

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

Roy S. Bloss, *Chairman*
Miss Ruth Galindo
Mrs. Bertha D. Hellum
Louis L. Stein, Jr.

CONTRA COSTA CHRONICLES

LEONORA FINK, EDITOR

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

POST OFFICE BOX 190 • MARTINEZ, CALIFORNIA 94554

VOLUME I SPRING 1966 NUMBER 3

CONTENTS

Elam Brown 5

by Alice McNeil Russi

The San Ramon Valley 17

by Leonora Galindo Fink

When Steam Came to Contra Costa County
— A Picture Story 28

A Tale of Two Indians

by Mary Tennent Carleton

Recuerdos 32

Membership 39

The Changing Face of the County 40

by Roy S. Bloss

ELAM BROWN

He was the County's first American alcalde, the founder of Lafayette and a shrewd buyer. For Elam bought the Rancho Acalanes at 9¢ an acre.

By ALICE McNEIL RUSSI

ELAM BROWN'S LIFE WAS APTLY CHARACTERIZED BY THE following quotation from the 1881 *History of Stanislaus County*: "What he lacked in ability and knowledge, he in a great measure made up in industry and economy." He had little opportunity for schooling, as his formative years were spent in the backwoods of Ohio. Yet, all through his life he held positions of leadership and responsibility and became one of Contra Costa County's most respected and prominent pioneers.

Elam Brown was born on June 10, 1797, in Herkimer County, New York. Soon after his birth his Scottish parents, Thomas and Elizabeth Lyons Brown, moved to Berkshire, Massachusetts. When

the boy was seven years old the family made an arduous journey of seven hundred miles over the Allegheny Mountains to within about thirty miles of present Zanesville, Ohio. Only eight other families had preceded them there. A log schoolhouse was built and some semblance of schooling was established. Elam, however, being the eldest child of the family of three boys and four girls, was soon plunged into the labors of the farm and had little time for study. When he was eighteen his father died, and young Elam assumed the responsibility as head of the family until he was about twenty-one.

At this time he left the farm in the care of his younger brothers and walked five hundred miles to the French trading post at St. Louis, in search of work. That winter he rafted on the Missouri River. Finding no further work there, he went to Madison County, Illinois, in company with Charles Gregory, the uncle of Munson Gregory, one of the pioneer settlers of Ygnacio Valley. There he and Charles Gregory farmed in shares for a year.

About 1820, Elam moved fifty miles north to a new settlement on Apple Creek. There he met Sarah Allen, the daughter of Thomas Allen, and on January 10, 1823, Sarah and Elam were married. The Browns farmed but a few years at this place, then moved to Morgan County, forty miles north, where they remained fourteen years. Elam helped with the organization of the new county and held the office of Justice of the Peace for twelve years. It is interesting to note that the election returns indicate that his area of jurisdiction was named Walnut Creek. While still maintaining his farm, he worked throughout the summers of 1826 and 1827 in the newly-discovered lead mines, in what later could be defined as the State of Wisconsin.

In 1837 the Brown family moved to the Platte Purchase, near present Platte County, Missouri, an area which had been purchased from the Indians the previous year. There they cleared a one hundred eighty acre farm. Four children were born to this pioneer couple: Thomas Allen, Warren, Margelina and Lawrence Myers. In 1845

The 3,328-acre Rancho Acalanes purchased in 1847 by Elam Brown. His home and grist mill were the first buildings erected in what became Lafayette, as shown in this 1894 map.

Elam's wife died. It has never been established that she was related to the Allens who crossed the plains with the Elam Brown train. It is quite possible, however, since many of them were from the Platte area, not too distant from Madison County, Illinois.

Following the death of his wife, Elam sold his farm and, in 1846, with himself as captain, organized a company of sixteen families to make the long journey overland to the Pacific Coast. On May 1, 1846, the party crossed the Missouri River at St. Joseph. Other groups were admitted along the way until the train was composed of about thirty wagons. From time to time other trains traveled with the party for a day or two, but always as separate entities. For awhile the Donner party was one of these groups. By moving independently, Elam Brown was able to negotiate the pass in the Sierras, to which the Donner family gave their lives and name, only a day or so before winter closed in.

Traveling in the Brown train were several Allen families, principally those of the brothers, Isaac and David Allen. Isaac assisted Elam in the position of co-captain.

A 1903 picture of the old adobe in Happy Valley where Elam Brown and his family lived until their home had been completed. The women, from left, are Mrs. French, Mrs. Symons and Mrs. Bunker.

Most of the difficulties and experiences of the journey across the plains are well known. However, a few incidents may have escaped common knowledge. William Allen, a son of Isaac, described in *Life On The Trail,* which was recorded by Samuel Albert Allen, the meeting between Elam Brown and an Indian chieftain of unknown temperament. William took cover and trained his trusty flintlock on the chief, in case he caused trouble. After the meeting was over, William discovered that he had lost the vital flint out of the rifle and the old chief had been quite safe all the time.

In the line of march, the lead wagon one day would fall to the rear the next day. Exceptions were made when a man was ill and his wife had to drive. Perhaps an important reason for the rotation was the incessant dust on a great portion of the journey. Many times the wagon ahead could not be distinguished and frequently not even the driver's own oxen. William also related how the wagons had to

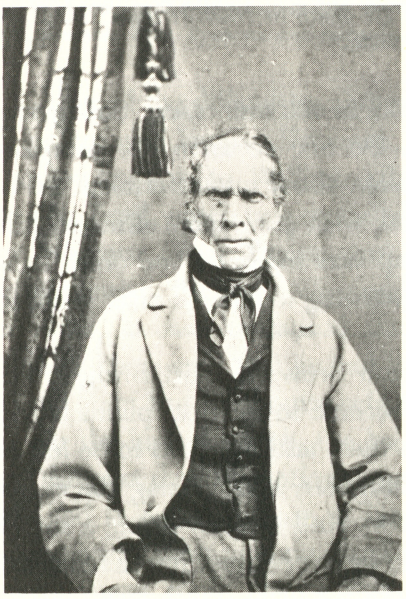
The home where Elam Brown lived until his death in 1889. It stood beside the creek in what is the present center of Lafayette.

be caulked before fording streams and, in extreme cases, "outriggers" would be built to help float them. On one occasion the company reached a particularly turbulent stream about mid-afternoon. All of the above precautions were taken and, with quite some difficulty, the fording was accomplished and camp was made on the other side. Great was the amazement the next morning to find the river reduced to a mere trickle.

Tragedy took its first toll of Elam Brown at Fort Bridger. His son, Warren, and David Allen had become so ill with "plains fever" that it was impossible to travel with them and they had to be left at the Fort. David's sixteen year old daughter, Mary, being the eldest of the family, drove his wagon. At Fort Hall Andrew Allen, a son of Isaac, contracted the fever and had to be left behind. It was here that Elam secured the services of a guide, as little was known of the Emigrant Trail to California, which branched off from the Oregon

Trail. Then Isaac Allen died somewhere between the Snake and Humboldt Rivers, leaving Elam Brown with the burden of sole command. Mr. Adams, the head of another family, died also and fully half of the emigrants were ill.

Isaac's wife, Margaret Miller Allen, and a son, Thomas Gartner Allen, hovered between life and death for several weeks. John Ceton Allen, a son not yet of age, was the only male driver for Isaac's wagon. John later told of the many times he would stop and go to the rear of the wagon and brush the dust from his mother's face to see if she still was breathing. Both Margaret and Thomas recovered, but Elizabeth, the wife of David Allen, who had been left at Fort Bridger, died and was buried at the Sink of the Humboldt. Graves were left unmarked and were trampled by the animals, so that no clue would be left to enable the Indians to desecrate them.



Elam Brown in the 1870's.

PRAISE YE THE LORD

Amid all the various surroundings and positions through life, I have never struck or been struck; never run for or from a man or boy. I have had but few lawsuits or contentions. I have never bet a cent on a race or cards and never dealt in stocks. I was never intoxicated by liquor, although I was raised in a tavern; but I have never dealt in the article since. I have never cheated a man knowingly out of a dollar; but the reverse has occasionally occurred. I do not intend this as a boast; but as an acknowledgment of the blessing bestowed on me through a long life by my good and benevolent Creator.

— Elam Brown, as quoted in Smith & Elliott's *Illustrated History of Contra Costa County* (circa 1879.)

A plausible explanation of the cause of "plains," "mountain" or typhoid fever is given by Dr. Bryant in his *Rocky Mountain Adventures.* His trail crossed that of the Elam Brown party and he administered to many of the sick. He noted that all were drinking much milk because of their fear of the water or the lack of any. He theorized that the cows drank this same water, then were driven hard in the hot sun and became feverish, passing this on to the emigrants in the form of the milk. The doctor prescribed lots of hot tea and no milk for a sick lady, who was sure to die. Later he learned that the woman had recovered and was quite healthy.

On August 29, 1846, at the present site of Reno, a daughter, Elizabeth Jane Allen, was born to the wife of Andrew, who had been left at Fort Hall. Andrew never again saw his wife, as she died shortly after the birth of the baby and was buried at the camp. Andrew later recovered, as did Warren Brown, and they came on to California to join their families.

Winter was rapidly approaching and the party made all haste possible in order to cross the Sierras before the snows blocked the pass. The Truckee River had to be forded twenty-seven times during the ascent. A sheer, two hundred foot wall, near the summit, seemed insurmountable. It required fifteen oxen to draw up each of the wagons, one by one. The descent was a most harrowing experience. In some cases the wagons had to be lowered over the rocks by block and tackle, or large logs were tied behind to act as brakes. One pioneer remarked, "This is sure hard sleddin', folks, but thar'll be a telegraph line over this mountain inside of fifty years." His comment brought disparaging laughs yet, in less than half the time, the Central Pacific Railroad was in operation over nearly the same route.

A recruiting officer for the United States Army met the party soon after they arrived within the borders of California. The country was at war with Mexico and the government was offering $25 a month for service in the Army. Many young men joined, including John Ceton Allen and Overton H. Foster, the brother-in-law of

William Allen. These youths continued on to Los Angeles and engaged in the campaign until the end of the war.

On October 10, 1846 the weary emigrants arrived at the rancheria of Captain John Sutter, not far from his Fort. Here Elam Brown and his party rested for a few days and talked over their plans for the future. After traveling together for almost six months across plains, desert and mountains, the time had come to decide where they were to settle in this new land. The wagon train broke up, some families going to Sonoma, some to the Napa Valley and others to the Adobe of Joseph Chiles in Chiles Valley, near present Lake Berryessa. Elam Brown planned to locate in the Santa Clara Valley. He made arrangements with Captain Sutter to have his wagon and oxen taken by boat to Yerba Buena. He considered his team too exhausted to make the trip overland.

From Yerba Buena Elam and his family continued around the Bay to Mission San Jose, where they remained for a week, then proceeded to Mission Santa Clara. Here Elam became involved in the "Battle of Santa Clara," between the Californians and the Americans. All of the American settlers in the Santa Clara Valley had gathered at the Mission for safety. Elam joined the small group of men who were organized to protect the families. Most of the men had gone off to join General Fremont's Army. Among those at the Mission were some of the men from Sonoma, who had been members of the Bear Flag Party. There were William Mendenhall, Napoleon Bonapart Smith and Nathaniel Jones.

William Mendenhall and Napoleon B. Smith had come from Missouri on horseback in 1845. Nathaniel Jones and his wife, Elizabeth, the daughter of Isaac Allen, Elam's co-captain, had preceded the Brown train across the plains by only a few weeks. William Mendenhall, later one of the pioneer settlers of Livermore, married Mary Allen, the daughter of David Allen, a member of the Brown train. This wedding was performed at Santa Clara on April 18, 1847 and was the first union of Americans in this area. Napoleon B. Smith married Elam's only daughter, Margelina, soon after.

The late Mrs. Jennie Bickerstaff Rosenberg holding the lantern given to her father by Elam Brown. This handmade lantern was used by him while crossing the plains in 1846. It is now in the historical collection of the Contra Costa County Library at Pleasant Hill.

During the summer of 1847, with Nathaniel Jones and Napoleon B. Smith, Elam whip-sawed lumber in the San Antonio Redwoods. The lumber was hauled to the mouth of San Antonio Creek, then ferried to San Francisco. A great many of the buildings of that settlement, which was then called Yerba Buena, owed their existence to Elam Brown.

On July 1, 1847 Elam Brown married Margaret Miller Allen, the widow of Isaac Allen, who had died on the trail. Margaret Allen and her son, Andrew, and daughter, Rebecca, had spent their first winter in California at the Chiles Adobe, with other members of the Brown party. The wedding was probably performed at the Chiles Adobe, as later records state that they were married in Napa County. Thus two, large pioneer families were united.

In the Fall of 1847 Elam Brown purchased the 3,328 acre Rancho Acalanes for $300. The money used for the purchase had been carried across the plains by Margaret Allen Brown in her clock.

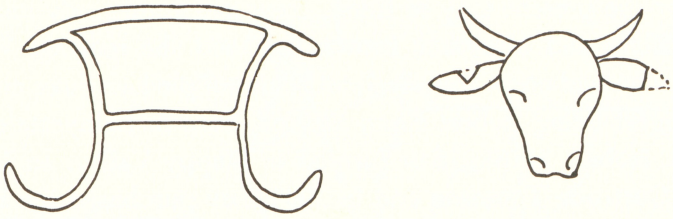
This Rancho, near the site of the lumber activities on the Contra Costa side of the Redwoods, originally was granted to Candelario Valencia in 1834 by Governor Jose Figueroa. The name was derived from that of a near-by village of Costanoan Indians. Candelario Valencia had been a soldier at Yerba Buena and the grant was a reward for his services. He disposed of it to the wealthy Yerba Buena merchant, William Leidesdorff. The latter had amassed a fortune in real estate, including the Rancho Rio de los Americanos, near Sutter's Fort, and had made known his willingness to sell the Rancho Acalanes.

Elam Brown and his family moved to the Rancho in February, 1848. At the time of the purchase he had also acquired 300 cattle from William Leidesdorff. A corral was built and, before long, Elam engaged in extensive farming and cattle raising. He planted barley, which yielded 105 bushels to the acre, and wheat, which was equally productive. His grain was hauled to Sainsevain's grist mill at San Jose, to be ground into flour. This was a long and tedious journey through the San Ramon Valley that required a week. By 1853 he had located a millstone, adapted to horsepower, at Benicia and had it ferried across the Straits and set up on his Rancho. This was the first mill erected in Contra Costa County. This same stone was installed at Lafayette Plaza, as a memorial to its founder, by the citizens of the community at the instigation of the Lions Club in 1955.

When Elam and Margaret came to the Acalanes Rancho, they brought with them Josiah and Melissa Allen, a son and daughter of Margaret, her grandchild, Elizabeth Jane Allen, the infant daughter of Andrew, and Elam's son, Lawrence. The family first lived in an adobe that had been built in what is now Lower Happy Valley. Several sites were chosen for a permanent home but had to be abandoned, due to lack of a proper water supply. The final location of Elam's home was beside the creek in the center of the present City of Lafayette. The house was built of lumber from the San Antonio Redwoods.

Soon after purchasing Rancho Acalanes, Elam sold one tenth of it to Nathaniel Jones, Margaret's son-in-law, for $100. Nathaniel built the home that became known as Locust Farm, named for the locust trees planted from seed that had been carried across the plains. Elam's daughter, Margelina, and her husband, Napoleon B. Smith, joined the Browns, Allens and Joneses. These families formed the nucleus of the settlement that grew into the City of Lafayette.

At this time the United States was so embroiled in the slavery question that little heed was paid to the governing of newly-acquired



The Elam Brown cattle brand and ear notchings from Records of Marks and brands of Contra Costa County, *August 1850.*

California. In 1848 the Military Governor, General Bennett Riley, called for an election of delegates to a constitutional convention. Elam Brown was one of the delegates elected to represent the San Jose district, which then included all of the Contra Costa. Forty-eight representatives met at Colton Hall in Monterey on September 1, 1849. Elam Brown, at 52, was the senior member, the average age being 36. A constitution for the State of California was drawn up in the short period of six weeks and this remarkable document remains substantially unchanged to this day. Slavery was outlawed forever.

On March 30, 1848 Elam Brown was appointed Alcalde of his district, the only official in the entire Contra Costa area prior to the formation of a state government. After the adoption of the Constitution, in 1849, he was elected to represent the San Jose district in the first Assembly. He was returned, at the second meeting of the Legis-

lature, as the Assemblyman from Contra Costa County. Elam's son, Thomas Allen Brown, was elected the first County Clerk. Nathaniel Jones was the first County Sheriff and Napoleon B. Smith was the first County Assessor.

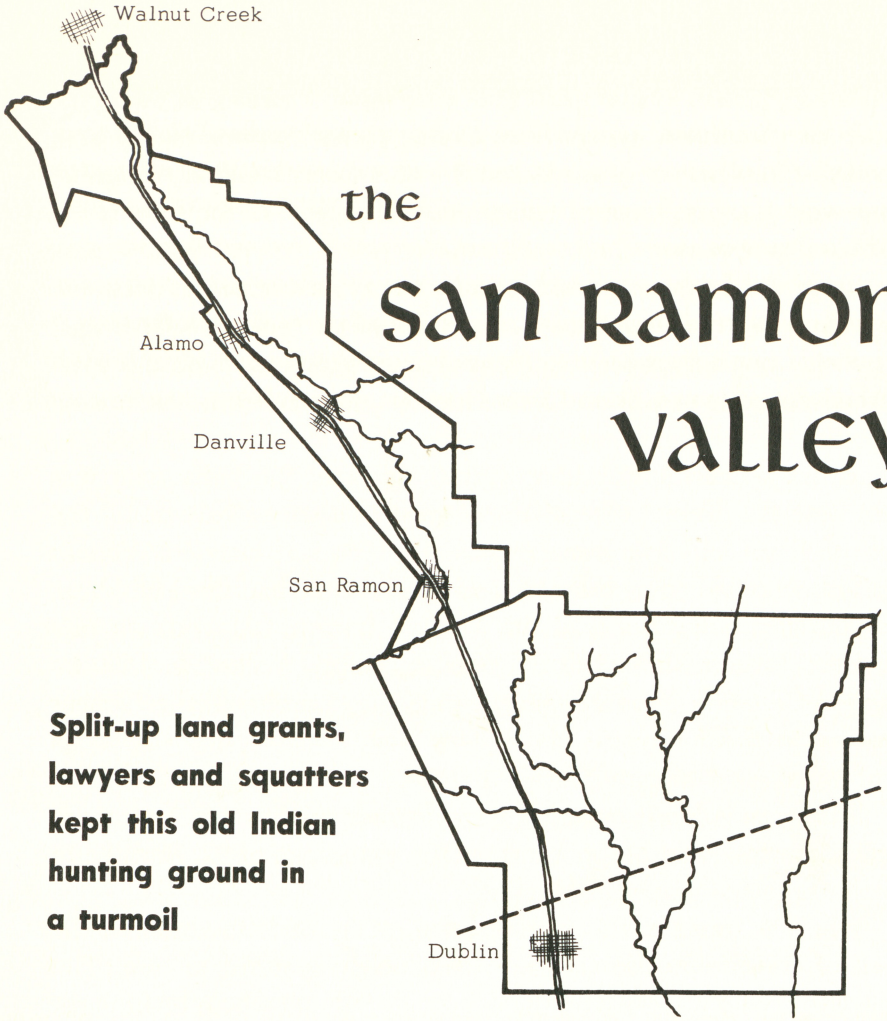
In 1852 Elam was urged to run for the State Senate but declined, preferring to devote his time to his Rancho. He took no further part in politics, but remained an influential man in the economic and commercial interests of Contra Costa County and excelled in the raising of grains.

Andrew Allen's daughter, Elizabeth Jane, the baby who was born near the present City of Reno, grew to a young lady under the care of Elam and Margaret Brown. In 1863 she married William McNeil, who had come from Ireland. This couple had three children, the youngest being Robert Elam McNeil, born in Lafayette on July 19, 1868. Robert McNeil first farmed in Happy Valley. In 1890 he married Gertrude Thomson and in 1903 they purchased the Pioneer Grocery at the Lafayette Plaza. This was the store that had been established by Benjamin Shreve in 1855.

Margaret Allen Brown, Elam's wife, died in 1884. On August 10, 1889 Elam followed her in death at the grand age of 92. Both lie in nearly forgotten graves in Martinez.

Much is owed to the founder of the City of Lafayette and the Lord of Rancho Acalanes. I am particularly grateful to him. The little baby, who was born on the overland trail and whom he brought safely to California, was my grandmother.

Mrs. Alice McNeil Russi is the daughter of Robert Elam McNeil and Gertrude Thomson. Robert McNeil was the owner of the Pioneer Store in Lafayette from 1903 to 1935, and was a prominent and highly esteemed civic leader. Her husband, Theodore Russi, was born in Pacheco. George Russi, his father, was one of the owners of the Pacheco Flour Mills. Mrs. Russi and her cousin, Mr. Glen B. Allen, have, for many years, been doing research on the history and genealogies of the Brown and Allen families.



the San Ramon Valley

Split-up land grants, lawyers and squatters kept this old Indian hunting ground in a turmoil

By LEONORA GALINDO FINK

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, THE VALLEYS SURROUNDING MOUNT Diablo had never been seen by a white man. They were inhabited only by primitive tribes of Indians, who lived simply and peacefully in this land, where the climate was mild and food was plentiful. One of the most beautiful of these valleys is the San Ramon. Its wooded

hills, fertile soil and gentle streams all combined to make it a popular habitat of the Indians. Here game was plentiful and there was an abundant supply of acorns and seeds.

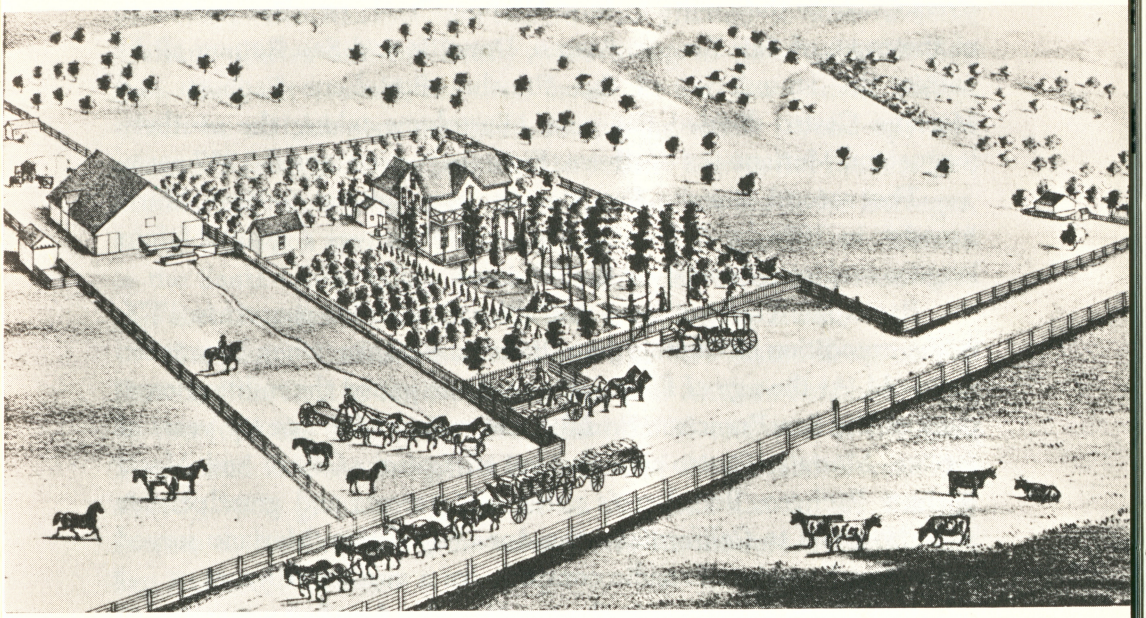
The development of this valley from a primitive wilderness, inhabited only by Indians, to a well-established settlement of farms, homes and towns was a slow process. The history of this development is typical of that of many other areas of our county.

The San Ramon Valley was first explored by Captain Pedro Fages. On March 20, 1772 Captain Fages, Padre Juan Crespi and twelve soldiers left the Presidio at Monterey to explore the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay. They followed the shore line to Carquinez Straits, then travelled along the Straits, past the present sites of Martinez and Pacheco, and over the Willow Pass to a point east of the City of Pittsburg. They returned to the Presidio of Monterey along the northern base of Mount Diablo and south through the San Ramon Valley. Padre Crespi, the diarist of the expedition, described the valley as having many Indian villages, with good land and abundant water and firewood. He considered it a good site for a future mission. Some of the Indians were friendly, while others were frightened by the soldiers, running away when the expedition approached their villages.

After Mission San Jose was founded in 1797, the padres of the Mission often visited the Indian villages, called rancherias, in the valleys to the east. Whenever they left the Mission, they were required to travel with an escolta, a guard of soldiers stationed at each mission, for their protection. The California Indians were not always friendly and peaceful, after the arrival of the white man. There are accounts of many Indian fights up to and even after the American occupation. In 1813 one of the padres of Mission San Jose and his escolta were attacked by eight hundred Indians in San Ramon Valley. Apolinario Bernal, one of the mission guards, fought the Indians alone, thus allowing the padre to escape, with the help of the other soldiers. He fought until his ammunition was gone and

his horse had been killed, then died from loss of blood. Lieutenant Luis Antonio Arguello, the Comandante of the Presidio of San Francisco, sent an expedition of soldiers to punish the Indians for Apolinario Bernal's death.

During the 1820's the sheep and cattle of Mission San Jose were pastured in San Ramon Valley and in the valleys to the north, during the winter months. The name San Ramon was probably given to the



The Joel Harlan farm on the Norris League of the Jose Maria Amador Rancho, in 1878. Harlan's first home was on the county line, south of this farm.

valley about this time. Jose Maria Amador explained, in his *Memorias,* that the name San Ramon was given to the creek by a mayordomo, named Ramon, who was in charge of the mission sheep pastured there. San Ramon creek had earlier been named El Arroyo del Injerto, injerto meaning a grafted tree. An unusual landmark on the bank of the creek was a large oak tree, from the side of which grew

a willow tree, as though grafted on. Thus the creek was named El Injerto by the early explorers. Later it became more commonly known as El Arroyo de San Ramon.

Two Ranchos were granted in the San Ramon Valley, both of which were named San Ramon. In 1833 the northern part of the valley was granted to Bartolome Pacheco and Mariano Castro, his nephew, by Governor Jose Figueroa. This grant was for two leagues and extended from the junction of San Ramon and Las Trampas Creeks, where they unite to form Walnut Creek, to a line just south of the town of San Ramon. Alamo, Danville and San Ramon all lie within the boundaries of this Rancho. Bartolome Pacheco and Mariano Castro divided the grant, Bartolome taking the southern league and Mariano the northern. Each league contained 8,917 acres.

The second Rancho San Ramon was granted to Jose Maria Amador in 1834 by Governor Figueroa. This was a grant of four leagues and contained over 20,000 acres.

Bartolome Pacheco came to California with his parents in 1775, in the expedition of Captain Juan Bautista de Anza, when he was ten years old. At the age of fifteen or sixteen he joined the military company of the San Francisco Presidio and retired after twenty years of service. Mariano Castro was the son of Ignacio Castro and Maria Barbara Pacheco, Bartolome's sister. His parents and grandparents had also come to California in the Anza expedition. Mariano served in the San Francisco Presidio company for a number of years.

Jose Maria Amador was the son of Pedro Amador, a member of the Portola expedition of 1769. He was born at the San Francisco Presidio and served in the company there and as a member of the mission guard at Sonoma. He took part in a number of explorations of the interior valleys and of the area north of San Francisco Bay. He also participated in expeditions against the Indians and, in 1819, was severely wounded in a battle near the present City of Stockton.

The San Ramon Valley, in the 1830's, was considered unsafe for permanent settlement. The government ordered the families to live in

the Pueblo de San Jose or on ranchos near the missions and presidios, where there would be less danger from Indian attacks. The Indians who lived around Mt. Diablo, then called by the Spaniards La Sierra de los Bolbones after the Bolbones Indians, were constantly troublesome. They stole horses and cattle from the missions, burned and plundered ranchos and fled into the San Joaquin Valley when soldiers were sent out to punish them. There were not enough soldiers to guard the ranchos as well as the missions and presidios.

When the Rancho San Ramon was granted to him in 1833, Mariano Castro and his family were living in the Pueblo de San Jose. He built a small, redwood house in the San Ramon Valley, which he and his sons occupied during the rodeo (round-up) and mantanza (slaughtering) seasons. He did not live on the Rancho but, instead, built an adobe home on the Rancho Pastoria de las Borregas, which had been granted to his son-in-law. This Rancho was located in the Santa Clara Valley, south of Sunnyvale, where the rancheros and their families were relatively safe from Indian attack.

Bartolome Pacheco was living in the San Mateo area, on the Rancho Buri-Buri of his brother-in-law, Jose Antonio Sanchez, when he received the land grant. He died in 1839 and two of his sons, Tomas and Lorenzo, inherited his league of the Rancho. Tomas had already been given a land grant on Alameda Creek, the Rancho Potrero de los Cerritos, so he turned over his interest in the Rancho San Ramon to Lorenzo.

Lorenzo Pacheco and his family, at that time, were living in the Pueblo de San Jose. Like his father, Bartolome, he had been a soldier and a noted Indian fighter. In 1829 he had been cited for bravery during a battle with the Indians in the San Joaquin Valley, a battle that lasted for several days. Lorenzo died in 1846 and his wife, Rafaela Soto de Pacheco, and his four children became the owners of the Pacheco league of Rancho San Ramon.

Jose Maria Amador built a two-story adobe home on his vast Rancho San Ramon, south of the Pacheco and Castro Rancho. His

adobe was located at the crossroads of travel through the valley and became a stopping-place for travellers. It was the center of great activity, for Jose Maria employed many Indians to weave blankets and make soap, shoes, saddles and other leather goods. A small village eventually grew up around his adobe home and workshop. It was named Dublin. When Contra Costa County was first formed, all of his Rancho lay within the boundaries of this county. After Alameda County was formed in 1853, the new boundary line placed part of his Rancho within the new county.

When the first overland emigrants crossed the plains to California, they were looking for new opportunities in a new and strange country. Many of them went directly to the Santa Clara Valley, where the Pueblo de San Jose was the center of population in the San Francisco Bay area. Everywhere bands of wild cattle roamed over the uncultivated hills and valleys. Only an occasional, isolated adobe home gave evidence that the land was occupied. There was great disappointment when the emigrants discovered that the most desirable land was already taken up by land grants of thousands of acres.

This way of life was incomprehensible to the newcomers, who were mostly farmers from the frontiers of the east and middlewest, and had little or no money to invest in land. Those who could, purchased land from the rancho owners. Those who could not buy land, took up claims where they wished, hoping that the improvements they made would eventually give them permanent ownership of the farms that they developed.

After gold was discovered, in 1848, thousands of gold hunters came to California by land and sea. Many of them, after first trying their luck at the mines, were also interested in land for farms and homes.

It was at this time that the San Ramon Valley began to emerge from its frontier state. In the early 1850's, settlers began to move in

to the Valley. There were only one or two Spanish families, relatives of the Rancho owners, living there temporarily. Rafaela Soto de Pacheco's brothers moved to the Valley early in 1850, planning to settle there. After all of their horses were stolen by the Indians, they moved to Ygnacio Valley, on the Rancho San Miguel. In the Fall of 1850 Leo Norris purchased one league of land, over 4,000 acres, from Jose Maria Amador for the reputed sum of $10,000, a gray saddle horse and a silver-studded saddle. Leo Norris was one of those hardy pioneers who had crossed the plains in 1846, before the discovery of gold, with his cousin, William Lynch. Later in the same year Major Samuel Russell settled near Leo Norris and William Lynch. After James Witt Dougherty purchased the greater part of Jose Maria Amador's Rancho in 1852, Major Russell bought over 600 acres from him.

By 1852 many other settlers had moved in to the San Ramon Valley. In the Fall of 1851 John M. Jones and his family, who had travelled west with Elam Brown in 1846, moved there from the Pueblo de San Jose. Another emigrant of 1846 was Joel Harlan, who settled on the Jose Maria Amador Rancho in 1852. He purchased 1,000 acres from Leo Norris and over 300 acres of the Bartolome Pacheco league. His home, for many years, was the landmark that indicated the boundary line between Contra Costa County and Alameda County.

The Leo Norris home in San Ramon Valley in the early 1900's. The woman in the buggy is Margaret Nash Norris, Leo's daughter-in-law. Built in 1850, it was the first frame house in the Valley.

1863

San Ramon July 2nd

List of taxable property belonging to Leo Norris in Contra Costa Co

2500	acres of land @ $5 - - -	$ 12500
	improvements on the same	3000
250	head of cattle 5 per head	1250
	notes and money - - - -	2000
	one span of mules	500
	do do horses	300
	one wagon	100
	one buggey	100
	hogs	300
6	head of stock horses 30 per head	180
		4730

To the County Assesors of Contra Costa Co

Sir I believe the above to be a correct list of all my property in this county

Yours respectfully
Leo Norris

The autographed tax assessment of his own property made by Taxpayer Leo Norris of San Ramon Valley in 1863.

Other well known settlers of this early period were David Glass, Erastus Ford, August Hemme and William Mitchell. In 1852 Robert Baldwin and William Meese bought a claim to 320 acres of the Bartolome Pacheco league. Among those who settled in the valleys to the east were Leonard Eddy, Wilson and Felix Coats and Levi Maxcy.

There were, as yet, no boundary lines to show which land lay within the Ranchos and which was free government land, since no surveys had been made. Many of the settlers established claims, called possessory rights, without attempting to determine the real owners of the land.

In 1851 the United States Government set up a Land Commission, before which each rancho owner was required to appear, with documents, to prove title to his rancho. This was a long and costly legal process that necessitated the hiring of lawyers, to represent them before the Land Commission, and surveyors, to determine the boundaries of their ranchos. The rancho owners, although wealthy in terms of land, found it difficult to raise money for lawyer's and surveyor's fees.

In 1852 Mariano Castro sold his league of Rancho San Ramon, the northern league, to his brother-in-law, Domingo Peralta, for 100 cattle. Domingo Peralta was the son of Luis Maria Peralta of Rancho San Antonio. Rafaela Soto de Pacheco, with four small children to support, sold some land claims in order to raise money for legal fees. In 1859 she deeded one square mile to William McCutcheon for $10, providing he would have the Rancho surveyed and the squatters removed at his own expense. Finally, she deeded one half of the Pacheco, or southern, league to Horace Carpentier as payment for his legal services in representing her before the Land Commission. By 1858 Horace Carpentier had also acquired a good share of Domingo Peralta's land as a fee for his services.

Horace Carpentier was a prominent, or perhaps one could say notorious, land lawyer, who became legally involved in almost every

Robert Oscar Baldwin in 1882. He came to California with William Meese in 1850, and in 1852 purchased a land claim south of present Danville. He was one of the first to plant wheat and barley in the San Ramon Valley and later became noted as an agriculturist, a horticulturist and an importer and breeder of fine Durham cattle.

rancho case in Contra Costa County. He began suits against many of the settlers on the Rancho San Ramon. He charged the squatters rents and damages, which they were unable to pay.

Finally, in 1865, a group of sixty-five settlers made a contract with him. They agreed to pay Horace Carpentier $90,000 in gold coin, over a period of four years, with interest at 1% a month. The provision was that he would settle all claims and judgments against them and give them valid deeds to their land. Among those who signed this contract were Robert O. Baldwin, Joshua Bollinger, Erastus Ford, John M. Jones, Daniel Inman, the Stones and the Tices. This was not the first payment that many of these settlers had made, in an attempt to get clear title to their claims.

The story of the land problems in the San Ramon Valley is

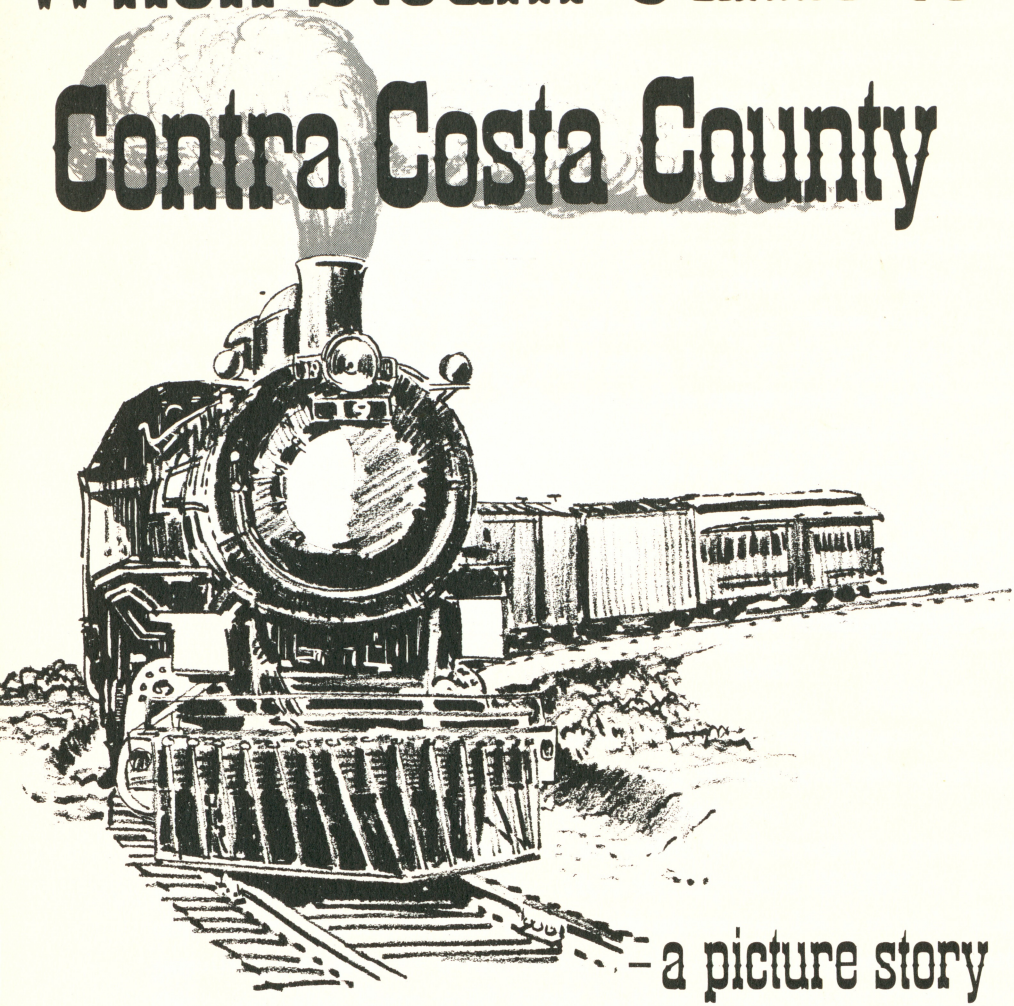
typical of that of many parts of our county. These problems prevented the normal and orderly development of the Valley. The rancho owners eventually lost not only their land, but the money that they acquired from sales of land. Many settlers had to pay over and over again for their farms, which was a severe financial burden. Others lost farms that they had cultivated for years. The principal gainers, after years of litigation, were the land lawyers and land speculators.

Most of the controversies had been settled by the 1870's and titles had been properly established. The land speculators moved on. The settlers, after years of uncertainty, could now feel secure in the ownership of their farms and homes.

The beauty of the land and the fertility of the soil had always existed, from the time of the Indians. Now these natural advantages could be properly developed. The San Ramon Valley, at last, became a land of rich, productive farms and peaceful, prosperous towns, that all gave promise of a bright future for this, one of Contra Costa County's loveliest valleys.

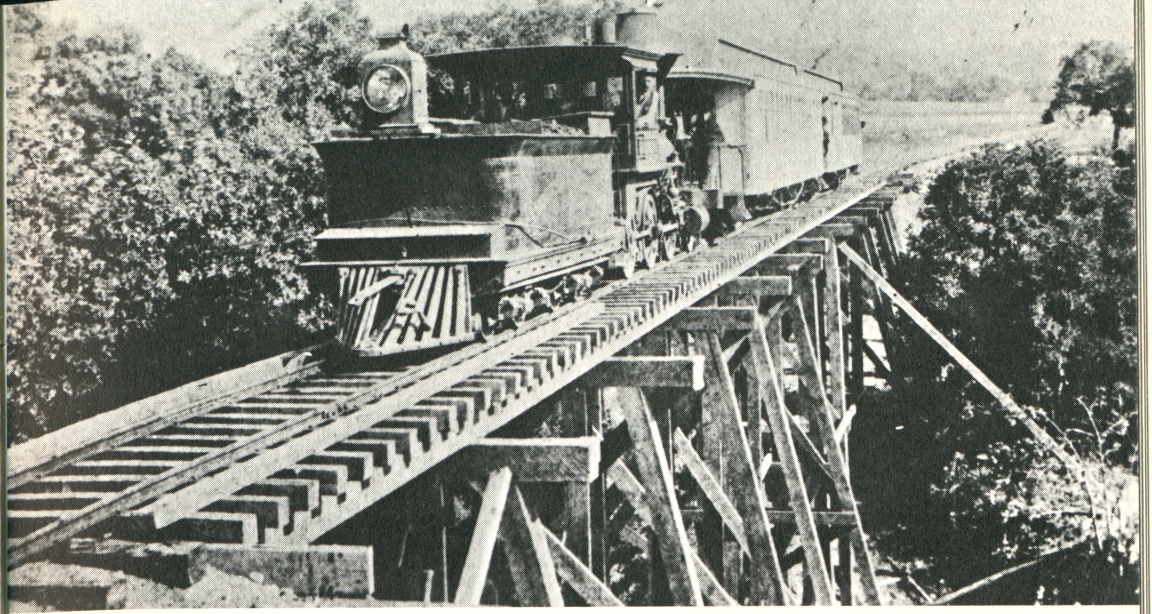
Mrs. Leonora Galindo Fink is a descendant of Jose Maria Amador, grantee of the Rancho San Ramon. Her grandmother, Marina Amador de Galindo, was the daughter of Vicente Amador and the granddaughter of Jose Maria. This article is based on research in the land grant records, in title abstracts and in early county assessment records.

When Steam Came to Contra Costa County

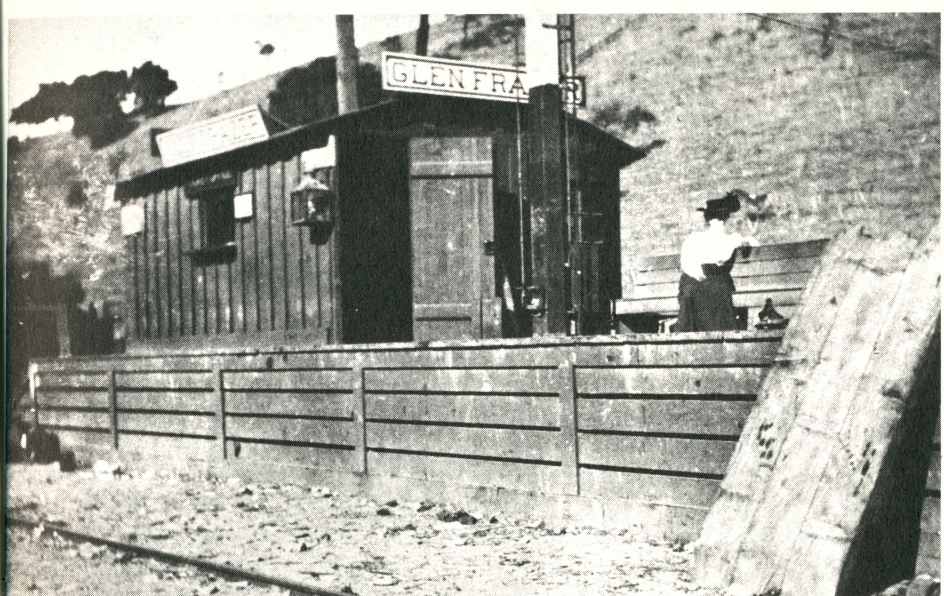


– a picture story

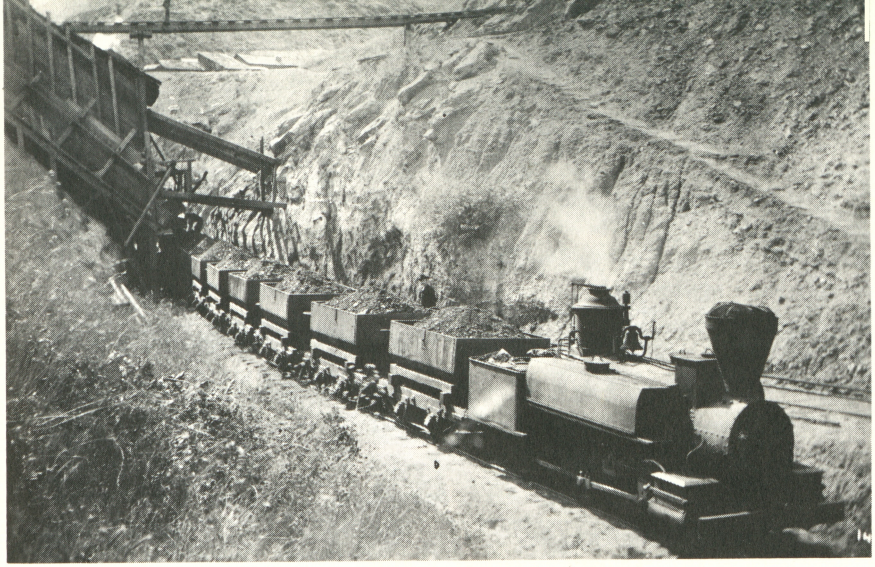
High-speed autos and a network of divided freeways make it all but impossible to visualize the great impact that the iron horse and steel rails had on Contra Costa County. Overnight, as history goes, Port Costa became one of the world's greatest grain shipping points, when the railroad made it practicable to sell San Joaquin wheat and barley to overseas buyers. Local county fruit growers, for the first time, could ship their harvest to fruit-starved markets in the east and midwest. But perhaps the greatest effect was not on commerce and agriculture but on people. Contra Costans from Bay Point (today's Port Chicago), Danville, Martinez, Orinda and intermediate points no longer were dependent upon horse and stage for a trip of business or pleasure to the city. A new era had come. "All aboard!" was a joyous call heard throughout the County.



The California Nevada Railroad picnic train crossing the Bear Creek trestle, north of the Orinda Park Station near the junction of Bear and San Pablo Creeks, in 1891. The train is shown headed toward Oakland. There was no turntable at Bryant Station (present Orinda Crossroads) which was the end of the line, so returning to Oakland the train had to run backwards, with its tender at the front.

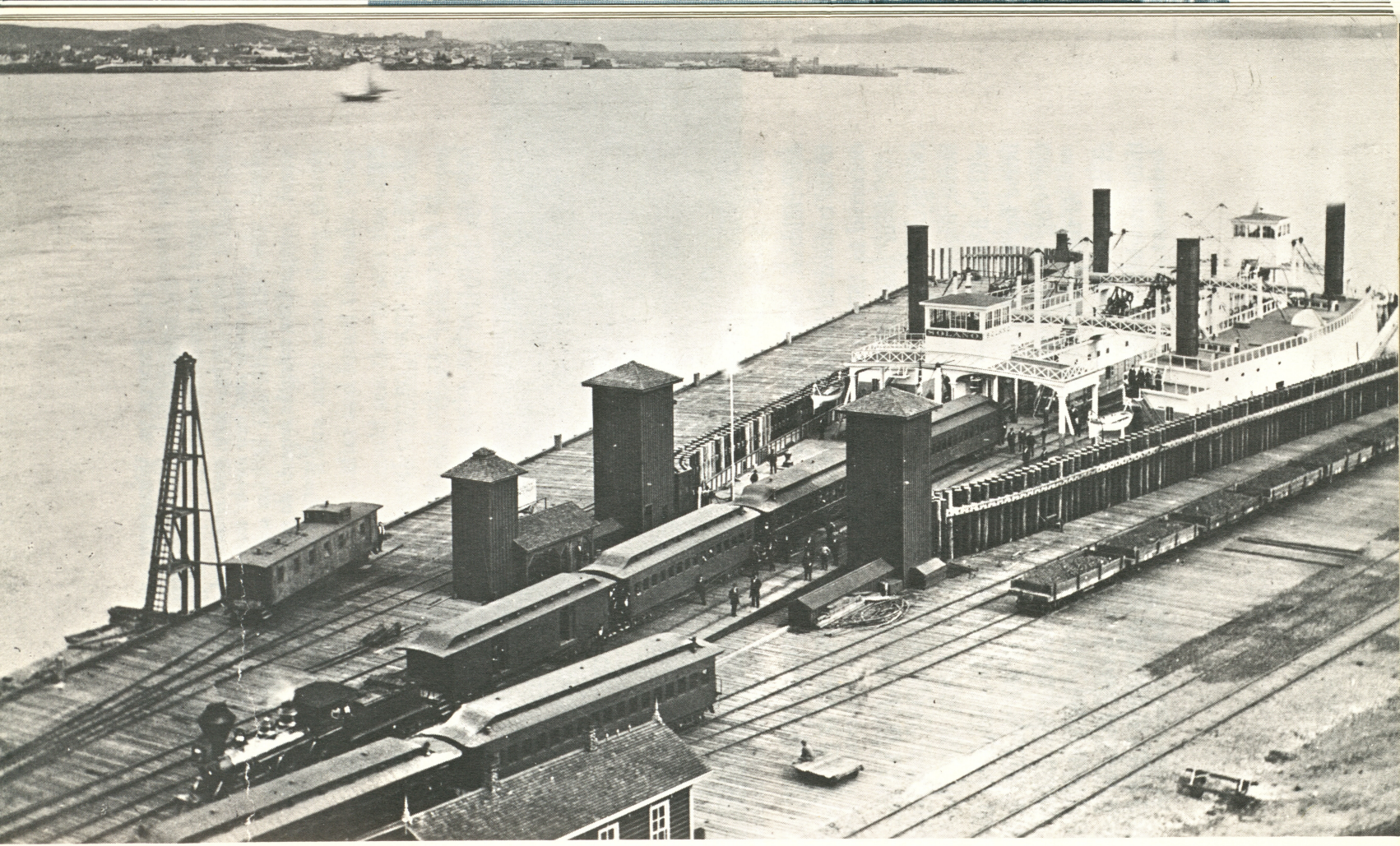


The Glen Frazer Station of the Santa Fe Railroad in Franklin Canyon, about 1903. Mrs. Frazer, waiting for the train, is looking toward Muir Station which served Martinez. The east portal of the Franklin Canyon tunnel is at the far left. This structure was later superseded by a new building that was abandoned in 1965.



Cars of the Pittsburg Railroad, pictured here being loaded at a Somersville mine bunker, hauled coal for the Pittsburg Coal Mining Co. to Pittsburg Landing (now the location of Dow Chemical Co.). The rail line from the coal mines commenced operations in 1866. This photograph was taken about 1896.

Steamcars of the Southern Pacific pause to take on passengers at the Concord Station. This segment of the line was the San Ramon Valley branch, which ran from the Oakland Pier to San Ramon via Avon, Concord, Walnut Creek and Alamo. The branch was built in 1890 and was extended to Livermore Valley in 1909.



The Southern Pacific at the Port Costa ferry landing, in 1879. The crossing to Benicia (background) was a vital link of the transcontinental mainline. The towers, on either side of the trains, raised or lowered the tracks to the ferry's deck, as required by the level of the tide. The vessel Solano *was one of the largest ferrys in the world. Service for trains across the Carquinez Straits stopped in 1930, when the railroad bridge was built.*

THE PEOPLE VS. WEMPETT AND WAMPETT

On September 28, 1850 two Indians named Wempett and Wampett were found guilty of manslaughter by a jury, and sentenced to pay a fine of one dollar and two weeks' imprisonment, but who their victim was, or what were the circumstances of the case, the records do not divulge.

History of Contra Costa County
W. A. Slocum & Co. 1882

A TALE OF TWO INDIANS

By MARY TENNENT CARLETON

In which is told the curious story of how two young redskins were kidnapped and handed by court order into the service of a white man

THIS IS THE STORY OF TWO INDIAN BOYS, DIEGO AND JOSE MARIA.

In the early days, the Spanish Californians, when they needed help on their ranchos, often raided Indian rancherias. Men, women and children, especially young boys, were taken back to the ranchos to be trained as house servants and vaqueros. The last of these raids occurred in 1850 at Clear Lake in Lake County.

After this raid, one of the Californians received, as his share, two grown men and two boys. The Californian started to drive them home, together with his remuda of saddle horses. When they arrived within a mile or two of Suisun Bay, he decided to change his tired horse for a fresh mount. He took off the saddle in the Spanish style, throwing the stirrups over the top and then removing the saddle.

At this point the ranchero decided to take a rest, using the saddle as a pillow. Unfortunately, he fell asleep. The grown Indians stealthily crawled up and grabbed him. Ordering the boys to hand them

Dr. Samuel Johnson Tennent

the Californian's sword, which was carried on the logger head of the saddle, they killed him and mutilated the body, slashing it again and again. Some white men came along shortly after and found the body. They could see that it was the work of Indians, so they tracked them down, took them across the Straits to Martinez and had the pair put in prison.

My grandfather, Dr. Samuel Tennent, was in Martinez at the Court of Sessions, as Associate Justice, the day the Indians were brought in. He obtained permission to take the two young boys to his home in Pinole Valley, to await the trial.

My grandmother, Dona Rafaela Martinez de Tennent, always insisted on baptizing any of the heathen who were willing. These boys were duly baptized and given the Christian names of Diego and Jose Maria. Don Samuel stood as their padrino (godfather), while Dona Rafaela was the madrina (godmother).

Jose Maria was the son of a chief and an extremely bright boy, who spoke several Indian dialects. Both boys were excellent swimmers, having been raised on the Lake, but neither had ever ridden a horse. This they proceeded to learn, using a big, gentle work horse. Jose Maria promptly fell off and broke his leg. Dr. Samuel set the bone and, when the day of the trial came, sent the boys to Martinez by sloop. Because Don Samuel was partial to men who followed the sea, there was always a seafaring man, usually an old captain, at the ranch and a sloop with which the bay could be navigated.

At the trial Jose Maria, who was nicknamed Chiquito, translated

State of California
Contra Costa County

Where as Samuel J Tenant of contra costa County has now in His posefsion two Male indian boys one named Jose Marine and the other is named Diego said indians is aged About Eleven years the parents of said indians being unknown they having been forcibly as far as I can Ascertain abducted from their Parents in sonoma or trinities Counties to This County and for Leagal purposes they Are Left in the cusidy of said Tenant And it being maid satisfactory to Appear That said tenant has used no Compulsory Means to Obtain said indians Boys from their parrents or friends

I Absalom Peak an Acting Justice of the peace for said County of Contra Costa do hereby Agree And Authorize Samuel J Tenant to have the Care Custidy Controll and Earnings of said indian Boys Jose Marin and Diego until Each shall attain the age of Mayority

Given under my hand And seal This second Day of October Eighteen Hunedred fifty

Absalom Peak, J P (Seal)

A document, dated October 2, 1850 and signed by Justice of the Peace Absalom Peake, giving Dr. Tennent custody of Jose Maria and Diego until they attained the age of majority.

for the two grown Indians to another Indian who, in turn, translated to the Judge. The dialects, used by the different tribes, were numerous. The verdict was that the Indians had acted in self defense and, as noted in the Contra Costa County History, they were shortly freed, taken across the Straits, and allowed to return to their people.

When the boys were asked if they wished to return with their elders, they said, "No, we wish to go with our padrino." Therefore the Judge, Absalom Peake, gave Dr. Tennent guardianship over them until they became of age.

The evening the trial was finished, Don Samuel went to the sloop and discovered that the old captain had indulged too freely and was intoxicated. He instructed him not to go out, as a strong wind was blowing and the Straits of Carquinez were dangerous waters. Jose Maria was left on board with the captain. The next morning the Doctor again went to where the sloop was moored, only to find it gone. He and Diego rode back home to the Pinole Valley.

The sloop did not arrive so, a few days later, Don Samuel rode along the coast to Martinez in search of it. There was no sign of the sloop or its passengers. He then crossed to Benicia and again searched the coast line. Presently, out of the tules, ran a little yellow dog that belonged to the Pinole Rancho. The dog led Don Samuel to Jose Maria. He swam the Straits, when the sloop capsized in the rough waters, and had been living on roots. The old captain was never seen again.

Jose Maria grew to be strong, brave and fearless. He was a good stockman, an excellent rider, and very clever in the handling of the reata. He became his padrino's body-guard, when they rode on moonlight nights to track down cattle thieves. Our family never took part in an Indian raid, but when horses or cattle were stolen from the Pinole Rancho, they always "followed the brand" and attempted to recapture their lost stock. These dangerous journeys sometimes took them as far as Nevada. With Chiquito's help, Don Samuel was usually successful in turning the cattle thieves over to the Sheriff.

Once, when riding the range, Jose Maria found some of the Rancho Pinole cattle in the corral of a neighbor, who lived close to the line on the Sobrante Rancho. He rode up and asked this neighbor why he had "our" cattle in his corral. The neighbor pulled his gun but, before he could use it, Jose Maria lassoed him around the neck. He choked him until he was down and then, taking off the reata, drove "our" cattle home. The neighbor had Jose Maria arrested, but Don Samuel defended him and proved that he had acted in self defense.

Later Don Samuel sent the young Indian back to visit his people, Diego having left at a much earlier time. On his return, Jose Maria brought back beautifully decorated baskets and bows and arrows as gifts. Some of the baskets were covered with beads and feathers and were water tight. After this visit the young Indian returned to his people for good.

In 1939 we went to Clear Lake on a vacation. I took along one of the old baskets, in an attempt to locate someone who had known about Jose Maria. One pioneer woman living there explained that Indians always left imperfections in their baskets. They believed that when they made a perfect basket, it was time for them to die and go on to a more perfect existence. This imperfection is just like a signature. The basket, according to the woman, had been made by a very ancient Indian woman, called "Blind Annie," who had lived on Salt Creek.

We were unable to drive to Salt Creek, because of the condition of the roads. So we returned home with no word of Jose Maria, who had spent his youth on the Pinole Rancho, and had returned to Lake County to lead his tribe.

Mrs. Mary Tennent Carleton is the granddaughter of Dr. Samuel J. Tennent and the great granddaughter of Don Ygnacio Martinez, grantee of Rancho El Pinole. The story of the two Indian boys was told to her by her father, James Hugh Tennent.

RECUERDOS

RECOLLECTIONS OF ANOTHER ERA

The region north and northwest of Mount Diablo is a beautiful one — pretty valleys scattered over with oaks, many of enormous size, with wide branches often drooping like the elm. The rugged mountain rises against the clear sky, and when illumined by the setting sun is an object of peculiar beauty. Our camp was in a very pretty place, with great trees around, and the mountain in full view.

Friday evening we had a little incident. We were camped near a Mr. Clayton's house. His dog treed a large coon close by camp, up a very large and wide-branching oak. Mike and Pete built a fire under it, we all got around but no coon could be seen. Pete climbed the tree, no easy feat as the trunk was four or five feet in diameter. Up in the branches — still no coon — built another fire — it lit up the foliage, and the scenery around — caught a glimpse of him — Pete followed him out to the end of a lofty limb sixty or eighty feet from the ground and shot him with his revolver. It was exciting, as he got higher and higher, shooting and missing, in the dark, until he had but one more load left, then following him out to near the end, and that ball brought him. He was a huge fellow, much like our eastern coon, but rather larger, and of a different species.

Up and Down California in 1860-1864
The Journal of William Henry Brewer

I went to San Pablo to get my cows that Sweet was milking. When I got there, he said the largest grizzly bear that was ever seen

by any of the old Spanish settlers, had killed eleven of my cows and one of Davis and a fine three-year old colt of Victor Castro. Mine were all choice cows worth one hundred dollars each. I told him he ought to have let me know sooner.

There was a hunter named Bob Dykeman, known on the San Joaquin as Hunter Bob. I told Bob I would give him one hundred dollars if he would kill that bear. I got two hounds of Mr. Mendenhall, and one morning, after the bear had killed another fine colt of Victor Castro, I started with Bob and old Davis, a North Carolina hunter, who said no bear could scare him.

The hounds soon found the bear in a tributary that runs into San Pablo creek. As they were chasing him out of his bed, Davis went down into the creek to get a drink of water. The bear was above him about ten steps. Bob and I were on the opposite side of the creek from the bear, which stood in fair view, fighting the hounds. I told Bob to be careful and not shoot one of the hounds, and to aim for his heart. Bob took fair aim, and shot him through the heart. He rolled down into the creek and knocked old Davis down. The bear's dying groans could be heard a mile off. I called to Davis to run, but he said, "I can't get these ——— old legs of mine to move." So the bear died at Davis' feet. Bob and I ran down with our guns and knives to save Davis, and when we got to him he was as white a looking man as I ever had seen. He had hold of his gun with both hands with the butt end on the ground, trying to get up on his feet, and was so frightened he could not move.

Bob cut the bear's throat with his hunting knife, and told me that if I would give him that monster of a bear he would take him for the hundred dollars. I let him have the bear, and he skinned him and sold the skin for thirty-five dollars, and then sold the meat in Oakland. It weighed fifteen hundred pounds. He got for the skin and meat one hundred and fifty dollars.

California '46 to '88
By Jacob Wright Harlan

Membership Additions

A cordial welcome is extended to the following members who have been enrolled on the Society's roster since the preceding issue of the *Chronicles.*

Mrs. Betty T. Azary, *Martinez*
M. D. Blim, *Walnut Creek*
Terrance M. Bresnahan, *Lafayette*
Mrs. Mary Tennent Carleton, *Corcoran*
College Park High School, *Pleasant Hill*
George S. Deeds, *Martinez*
Edward M. Downer, III, *Richmond*
Mrs. M. J. Duarte, *Concord*
L. W. Evans, *Orinda*
William J. Faria, *Pinole*
Howard P. Fereira, *Danville*
Mrs. M. L. Fernandez, *Pinole*
Arthur W. Fort, *Walnut Creek*
Mrs. R. B. Gallogher, *Antioch*
Mrs. Anna Soito Gaumer, *Richmond*
Russell Glenn, *Danville*
Herbert L. Hageman, *Livermore*
Mary Ellen Jones, *Orinda*
Rev. Thomas E. Kane, *San Pablo*
Al Kaplan, *Danville*
Elizabeth Swett Knoll, *Berkeley*
B. M. Lafferty, *Pleasanton*
C. Alfred Lewis, Sr., *Pinole*
Robert Livermore, *San Ramon*
Mrs. Elaine Amend Long, *Pinole*
L. Robert Martin, M.D., *Concord*
Mrs. Lucille Mauzy, *Walnut Creek*
Merriewood School, *Lafayette*
Mrs. O. A. Mesenburg, *Concord*
Dr. H. F. Mortensen, *Lafayette*
William T. Rei, *Diablo*
Elmer A. Reinstein, *Walnut Creek*
Paul E. Schultz, *Martinez*
Sheriff Review, *Pleasant Hill*
Harold W. Smith, *Diablo*
Charles R. Strain, *Martinez*
Thomas E. Tryon, *Lafayette*
Mrs. Ethel D. Turner, *San Anselmo*
Mrs. Elwin F. Ware, *Martinez*
Mary E. Ware, *Martinez*
Ygnacio Valley High School, *Concord*

PICTURE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

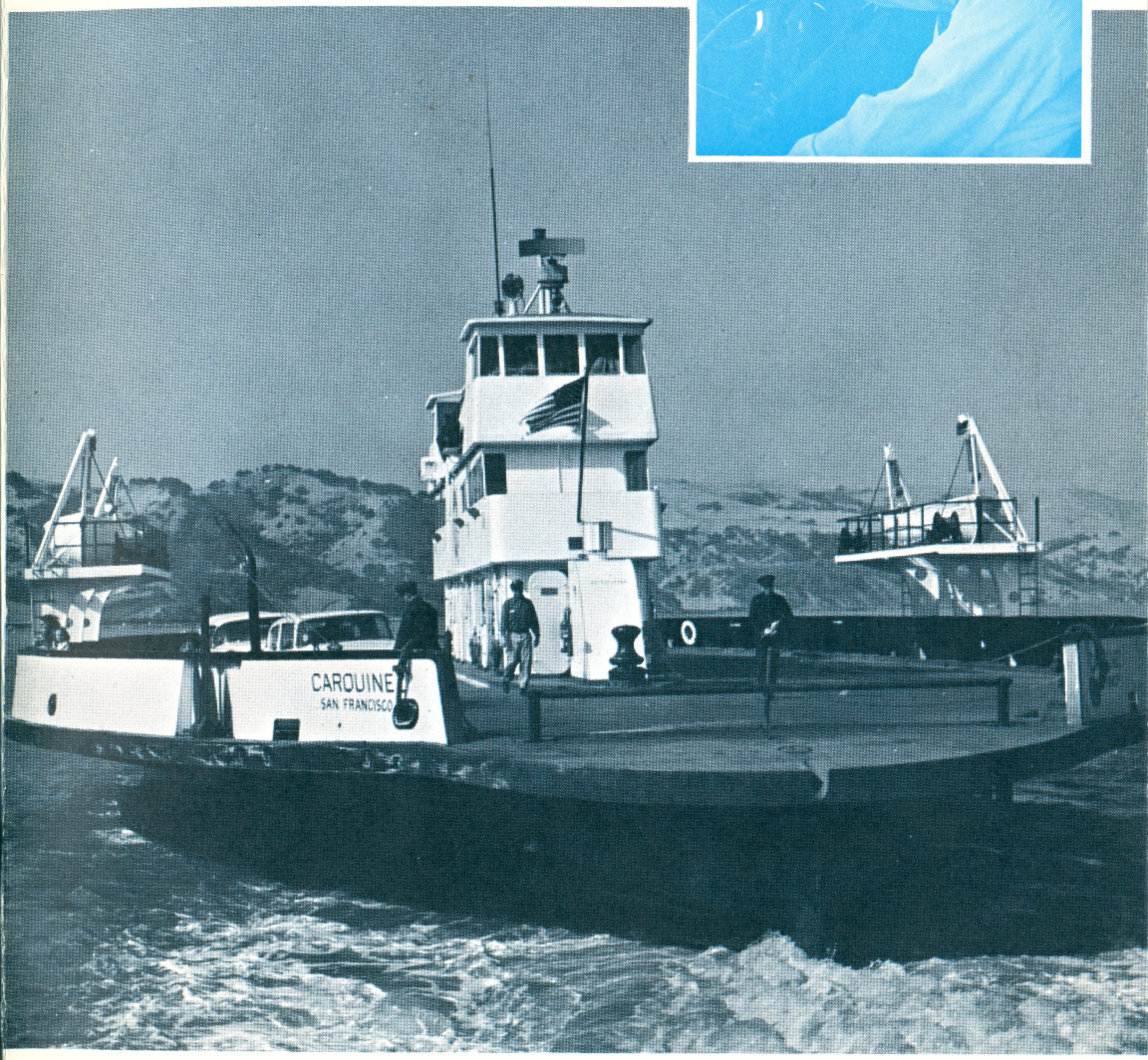
Glenn B. Allen: 15; Roy S. Bloss: 7 (from Louis L. Stein map), 26 (from Slocum's *History of C.C.C.*), 33 (from Smith & Elliott's *Illus. History of C.C.C.*), facing 40; Mary Tennent Careleton: 34; Leonora Galindo Fink: 30 (bottom); Alice McNeil Russi: 4, 9, 13; Louis L. Stein Collection: cover, 8, 10, 19, 23, 24, 29, 30 (top), 31.

The Changing Face of the County

FERRY *CARQUINEZ*

When her master shut down the Carquinez' *throbbing diesels on September 15, 1962, it was the end of an era. In the pursuit of progress loyal patrons had deserted the soft rolling of her sturdy steel deck for the rigid concrete of the new Martinez-Benicia Bridge. Ferryboating across the Carquinez Straits had been the first, the last and the most historic of all the routes that weaved a network of public transport on San Francisco Bay. That celebrated pioneer of Benicia, Dr. Robert Semple, inaugurated the Straits line in the memorable year of 1846, using oar power first, then horsepower. For the next 116 years, under the dominium of sundry owners, the Martinez-Benicia crossing served the ubiquitous needs of man and beast. The Pony Express galloped aboard Oliver C. Coffin's ferry, the original* Carquinez, *in 1860. Fight fans crowded the deck of a later vessel to cross to Benicia for the Corbett-Choynski battle of 1889, a disappointingly short encounter of only 27 rounds. Betweenwhiles, Contra Costa school children patronized the line to attend classes in Benicia. The* Carquinez *pictured here was commissioned in the mid-1950's and was operated by the State Division of Highways. It was sold, amid the inundating tears of ferry buffs, to the State of Florida. The inset shows Captain Alex Petzinger at the helm in 1960. The last trans-Straits voyage of the historical vessel was under the conn of Captain John Mathieson.*

ROY S. BLOSS


CAROUINE
SAN FRANCISCO

Contra Costa County
Historical Society